

# AN ACT TO RESCIND MANDATED SCOLIOSIS SCREENING IN SCHOOLS

## Current Washington State law: (Enacted 1979)

- Requires annual screening of all public school students in grades 5, 7 and 9.

## Current Considerations:

- Schools are an appropriate setting for various health screenings, but the routine screening of asymptomatic adolescents for idiopathic scoliosis has been controversial for years and is not supported by evidence based research.
- Screening causes students to miss valuable classroom instructional time
- Overall screening organization includes processing parental permission forms, providing pre-screening student education, securing space for private assessments of each student's bare back, arranging for volunteer assistance, documentation and distribution of referrals, follow-up efforts and state statistical reports.

## Current Research Synopsis:

- Review of evidence based research suggests that while scoliosis is an important health issue to the individual with a major curvature, it is not a significant public health issue.
- Scoliosis has a low prevalence, ill defined natural history, and poorly understood morbidity.
- No single screening test provides good sensitivity and specificity to determine which individuals likely have the disease.
- Efficacy of early intervention has not been demonstrated.
- Optimal screening program has not been defined.
- Costs and risks of screening have not been documented.
- Risks of screening exceed the potential benefits.

## Cost Analysis Example:

*Spokane Public Schools, 1999-2000 in conjunction with Shriner's Hospital and a grant that provided transportation for follow-up at Shriner's:*

- 7500 students were screened at school by trained registered nurses at a cost of \$35,000.
- 450 students were referred and transported to Shriner's Hospital for secondary screening.
- 45 students (0.6 %) were referred to their family physicians for further follow up and the vast majority required only continued monitoring by the physician vs. treatment such as bracing or surgery.
- Due to years of low referral / treatment rates, Shriner's and grant funding was discontinued.

## OSPI 2004-05 data:

- Of 148,813 students screened, 3.39% were referred to their private practitioners and only 0.02% were braced or had surgery.

## Current Status:

- Nov. 2006: School nurse leaders formed a scoliosis workgroup to review the literature and make recommendations.  
Unanimous recommendation: rescind the law
- Feb. 2007: School Nurse Organization of Washington (S.N.O.W.) member survey  
Results: 246 members (51%) responded and 96% of respondents voted to rescind the scoliosis law
- Feb. 2007: School Nurse Corps member survey  
Results: 88 nurses responded and 84% were in favor of rescinding the law
- In the majority of states, scoliosis screening in schools has never been required or is no longer required. Every year, additional states are repealing such mandates (i.e. Illinois-1998, Maryland-2006, Pending legislation- Connecticut, Florida, North Dakota and Washington)

## Confirmed support to repeal RCW 28A210.180-220 and RCW 210.240-250:

School Nurse Organization of Washington

Washington State Nurses Association

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Dr. Chris Olson, President, Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WCAAP)

Dr. John Corrales-Diaz, M.D., F.A.A.P., School Liaison to WCAAP, Chief of Pediatrics, Harrison Medical center

Dr. Kit Song, M.D., Orthopedic Surgeon, Children's Hospital Medical Center, Seattle, UW Associate Professor